

Spartans seek *1-36th Infantry*

Expert Infantryman's Badge the mark of excellence

A long rifle sewn just above the U.S. Army tag on the left breast of a Soldier's uniform might not mean much to the average observer, but to the infantryman this sign denotes the utmost competence in the grueling daily tasks that are the foundation American Soldier.

The Expert Infantryman's Badge, which started in 1943, is a series of events and hands-on tests that stretch a Soldier's limits both physically and mentally. Although the Combat Infantryman's Badge is awarded to infantry Soldiers who have participated in combat, the EIB is a refined examination of specific skills required to perform as an infantryman at the highest level of proficiency.

"Prerequisites for the EIB are rigorous," said 1st Sgt. Michael Johnson of Company B, 1-36th IN. Success in the Army Physical Fitness Test, a 12-mile rucksack march, expert marksmanship, and day and night land navigation, all pave the way to earning a chance at the EIB. Historically, the success rate is about 10 percent, making this a highly valued badge.

"Looking over and seeing another Soldier wearing the EIB gives Soldiers confidence in each other," said Johnson. The knowledge that a comrade in arms has what is considered to be a mark of military excellence lets other Soldiers know that the Soldier really knows his stuff and can be relied upon.

As the Army has evolved since the EIB's inception, so have the tasks required to earn the prestigious tab. Of the 37 tasks that comprise the test, two are new. The ability to wield the Army's newest infantry-based anti-armor missile and the use of laser optics in zeroing weapons, have recently been added to the ever-changing repertoire of the American infantryman.

The Javelin anti-armor missile, which has seen service in Operation Iraqi Freedom, was fielded by the 1st Armored Division in December 2002. The task of firing the weapon will evolve again as the division prepares to upgrade to the Javelin II in early 2005.

The bore light, a laser optic sighting device is also being used by the division. Designed to zero a weapon

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